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ABSTRACT

There are three components which combine to form a continuous cycle negatively affecting the development of the rurally disadvantaged child; these are: contact deprivation; experience deprivation; and response deprivation. However, the personal, structural, and professional behaviors of the classroom teacher can positively affect the development of the rurally deprived child via: (1) positive teacher attitudes and modeling which create a climate of trust and respect conducive to learning (personal); (2) a classroom setting that is attractive, comfortable, functional, and complete with learning materials (structural); (3) continuous teacher self-renewal (in-service education and/or university course participation (professional). Four components of instruction which provide the key to developing effective instructional practices for the rurally deprived child are: (1) development of objectives; (2) preassessment procedures; (3) methods of implemention; and (4) evaluation procedures. However, in each of these phases of instruction, it is important to relate what is being developed to the specific needs, interests, and ability level of the rurally deprived child. It should be clear, then, that deprivation in and of itself does not negate learning but that it does demand special attention to the development of teacher behaviors and instructional practices. (JC)

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# 'EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FOR COMBATING EXPERIENCE DEPRIVATION AMONG THE RURALLY DISADVANTAGED"

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The most neglected children in our society live in the homes along the backroads of rural society, among the dust patches and rock filled mountains of the nation. The urban slum child is recognized but not attended to; the mincrity group child is seen but not recognized; while the rurally deprived are not seen, recognized, or attended to in relation to social or educational arrangements. Indeed the rurally deprived child may be the most disadvantaged citizen in the nation. He stands hidden from the view of others, understood only as 'being from dirt poor surroundings'. He is not recognized as a potential learner--constructive contributor to society; rather he is most often recognized as dysfunctional component of rural life. Yet he <u>is</u> a future citizen who <u>can</u> comprehend life and utilize his talents to build a rational rural community.

The school (and specifically the classroom teacher) can be of assistance in enabling the rurally deprived child to actualize his abilities, expand his social perception, enhance his language base for communication, and equip him with implementation strategies for utilizing these qualities in his life context.

It is essential to examine the components which create rural deprivation, to examine teacher behaviors that relate to such deprivation and to create some proposed alternative forms of experience, teacher behaviors, and instructional practices that can effectively combat such deprivation. The intent of this paper is to approach these issues in a constructive-analytical-suggestive manner.

<u>Components of Rural Deprivation</u>. There are three components which combine to negatively effect the development of rurally disadvantaged children; (1) contact

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deprivation, (2) experience deprivation, and (3) response deprivation. Each of these components is related to the others and, in effect, form a cycle of continuous deprivation for the child.

The quality of human contact the rural poor child confronts is generally very low. This is no criticism of the rural poor but rather a point of fact that must be dealt with if the development of the child is to improve. For example, there is a direct correspondence between the educational level and socio-economic level of the parents and the way in which the parents have contact with their children. Kagan, Passow, and Coles, point to the way in which deprived parents treat their children. The quickness of direction, lack of concern with reading materials, and one directional nature of parent behaviors (adult verbally and non-verbally directs child in what he/she experience) all deprive the child of an opportunity to also direct some parts of his own life as he becomes capable.

In order to gain self identity the child must be able to control aspects of his life. And he must view significant adult models who also have control of their lives. Too often the rural poor lack such power and communicate a human feeling of powerlessness to their children. A thorough but gentle movement of multi-directional communication creates a climate for more effective learning and for a more stable self concept.

Related to this human contact deprivation is the experience deprivation of the rurally disadvantaged child. Because of the predicament of poverty the family often can only provide mere survival experiences for the child. Too often such children are on the receiving end of what they must do rather than the giving end of what they can do! For example the rurally deprived child rarely--if ever--experiences the act of leisure with meaning. Experiences such as being read to, reading to another person, directing another person in house play, observing another person reading, participating with others on trips to parks, places of interest, and manipulating

food and pliable goods ALL build the base for social, linguistic, and emotional development. Too often the rurally deprived do not experience such events.

Human contact and the nature of experiences provided for children are the base for the types of responses the child receives in his daily life. The rurally deprived child is most often on the receiving end of negative response patterns. Such responses as No!--Do not do that! Stay out of that room!--are indicative of the negative response pattern. Such a response system teaches the child that it is best to be passive, to be powerless. It tells him that he is not important--not a part of the environment.

Alternate responses such as--let's try this instead of that, you play with these pots and pans while mommy makes supper, here take the cup but let me have the glass--are indicative of a response pattern that enables the child to experience a sense of participation, control, and importance. It helps to communicate to him that it is good to be active--involved in the happenings of his environment. Rural poor children need to experience these positive response patterns if they are to gain the needed equipment for accomplishing reading, math, social, and science skills.

It is little wonder that the rurally disadvantaged are unable to read at normal developmental levels or accomplish the related skill and social living tasks in the school setting. Indeed a prime focus of social concern must be to equip parents with human ways of relating to their children. As citizens all of us can be a part of that concern. But what can the classroom teacher do? The following section of this paper examines some of the effective teaching behaviors for relating to rurally deprived children. The final section of this paper will then examine some instructional practices that can be helpful in motivating and involving disadvantaged children in meaningful classroom activities.

Effective Teacher Behaviors For Relating To The Rurally Deprived. It is possible to describe some of the effective teacher behaviors for relating to rurally deprived children. The personal, structural, and professional behaviors of the teacher can

positively effect the development of the child. Indeed as we have looked at the impact that parents do have on children (both negatively and positively) we can gain a sense of direction for what can be done by the classroom teacher to combat deprivation effect which so often hinders the development of the rurally poor child.

Personally, the teacher can create a climate of positive contact with young children; a form of interaction which communicates to the children that they are valuable and important. In the same respect the teacher can, via his/her own personal behavior, develop a climate of trust in the classroom. Thus making the classroom a place where children can enact ideas without the fear of constant reprisal.

Such a personal climate--created by the teacher--is inevitably related to a set of teacher attitudes that communicate positive feelings toward all the children in the classroom. The modeling--by the teacher--of acceptance and valuing all children will in turn be enacted as appropriate behavior by the children.

Structurally, the teacher can arrange--and further develop with experience and time--a classroom setting that physically is attractive, comfortable, functional for active-concrete learning; and contains the kinds of learning materials related to the types of children in the community.

Such structures usually contain materials of a diverse nature and centers of interest which children can gravitate toward both for skill and enrichment learnings. Such classrooms are fluid--providing children with avenues to develop themselves in meaningful ways. And these classrooms usually reflect the trust component and the responsible feeling of the teacher toward helping children become constructive and ordered adults.

Professionally, the rural teacher can develop a continuous self-renewal system via in-service education programs, institutes, and/or university courses of study. In order to further develop the personal and structural behaviors a teacher must renew himself/herself by making contact with research and new thinking that is

happening in their field of study. The teacher of the rural disadvantaged must constantly examine new methods of teaching, new rural life styles, and relate these happenings to the way they operate, personally and structurally, on their classrooms.

Personally, structurally, and professionally--the teacher of the rural poor can positively effect the lives of children. Develop a trust relationship via a flexible but responsible school program and constantly renew yourself and your teaching style by involving yourself in meaningful in-service education. An outgrowth of effective teacher behaviors for relating to the disadvantaged is the development of diverse instructional practices for use in the classroom.

Instructional Practices for Teaching The Rurally Deprived. The four components of instruction provide a key to developing effective instructional practices for the rurally deprived child. Those four components are; (1) development of objectives, (2) preassessment procedures, (3) methods of implementation and (4) evaluation procedures. In each of these phases of instruction it is important to relate what is being developed to the needs, interests, and ability levels of the children.

In developing objectives for the rurally deprived child, the classroom teacher should make a mental note of some of the following ideas; objectives should be developed with the child--making room for his talent and skill development, objectives should include enough diversity for all of the children to find a place for enacting the goals, objectives should indicate some of the 'alternative ways' students can complete the tasks, and they should be formulated in accordance with the different development levels in the room. For additional insights to incorporate into the development of instructional objectives for rurally deprived children consult the Appendix to this paper entitled: "What Research Says About Rurally Deprived Children And How They Learn".

It is imperative to preassess what the children know about the topics and objectives you have developed. This serves a two-fold purpose; it helps the teacher

to understand what facets of the topic various children are familiar with and what areas need concentrated material activity development.

Based upon preassessment feedback the teacher can develop a sound methodological and activity framework to enable the children to accomplish the goals. Some suggested ideas for use in developing your methods and activities are; keep the activities at a concrete-observable level to begin with and move from 'where the child is' to 'where he can manipulate new symbolic learnings', make the activity interesting to the children (it should contain some self motivating materials), develop activities which bulid success experiences (continual self confidence building), formulate activities that gradually introduce the children to a newer world, and design activities which provide constant feedback so that the child can continually re-develop his learning procedures. These are some helpful instructional practices to use in relating instruction to the lives of the rurally deprived child.

Evaluation should be an on-going process in all learning activities; this is especially applicable to the assessment of rurally deprived children and their development and progress. Keep in mind that standardized testing devices are of little value when evaluating disadvantaged students progress in learning units. Evaluation should reflect what the individual child has learned in relation to his own goals not those of the 'normal group'. In this same respect evaluation should eventually lead to self renewal of the individual. It should not be a negative force on the learner--rather it should be an integral part of growth--living--reflecting--and redeveloping new patterns of life.

Indeed all of the instructional processes (objectives, preassessment, methodology, and evaluation) should be developed and designed in relation to the life styles, learning pattern, and perceptual orientations of the children in the school and community. Building from this base the classroom teacher can develop a myriad of instructional sequences to help children explore and develop a newer, more humane world.

Summary. As we examine the components which combine to form rural poverty we can recognize that deprivation does not by itself negate meaningful learning among the children or adults. Rather it becomes clear that special attention is needed in developing teacher behaviors and instructional practices that are effective in assisting deprived children to actualize their lives.

# APPENDIX A

## WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT RURALLY DEPRIVED CHILDREN AND HOW THEY BEST LEARN

The following are items of interest and value that have been extracted from recent research studies which have been conducted on rurally deprived children and instructional practices which best promote learning. Of course these findings are only of value as they are related to the specific classroom and community context in which you teach. Yet each finding does tell us something about how we can improve our teaching practices to assist the rurally deprived child.

### I. About The Children

1. They are less verbal (need language experiences)
2. They are more fearful of new people and new experiences. (need gradual introduction to new experiences).
3. They are less self-confident. (need confidence building experiences).
4. They are less motivated to achieve in the academic world. (need to be motivated toward all learning goals).
5. They are less competitive in the intellectual realm. (need support in their endeavors).
6. They are less conforming to middle class forms such as cleanliness, good behavior, and adequate eating habits. (need understanding that their life style is good and introduction to new life styles as they are ready for them).
7. They are more likely to face problems in completing normal developmental tasks (need guidance on motor skills, perceptual skills, and social skills).
8. They are more likely to have developed poor health habits. (need nutritious foods via breakfast and lunch programs).
9. They tend to shy away from problem solving. (need assistance and encouragement to persist in problem solving).
10. They are more likely to have a poor home life. (need to see value in their home and to see parents in active roles).

## II. About The Teacher

1. They tend to be less concerned with rurally deprived children. (need both information and motivation to develop such concern).
2. They more often than not are ill equipped to deal with the rurally poor children. (need skill equipment and needed curriculum arrangements to help the child).
3. They tend to expect less of the rurally deprived child in terms of his academic performance and social behavior. (need human relations training and child development training to equip them with improved perceptual abilities).
4. They often overlook the 'special talents' of rurally deprived children. (need talent identification work and methodological assistance on how to help the children actualize those talents).
5. They often perceive the rurally deprived family as 'dysfunctional' in relation to school and community life. (need assistance in developing workable approaches to working with such families and involving them in the learning process).

## III. About The Curriculum

1. It tends to be arranged for 'massive education' for norms. (needs to be individualized for the specific talents and life styles of divergent children).
2. It tends to be too closed in only dealing with academics and skill learnings. (needs to be opened up to include life skills and individual personal needs).
3. Tends to rely too heavily on use of complex verbal materials. (needs to be diversified by adding non-verbal materials and more self-developed materials).
4. Tends to evaluate progress too often in terms of norms. (needs to be diversified to evaluate for criteria referenced data).
5. Tends to be oriented to the immediate community goals. (needs to consider world views and broader life styles so that the child can survive in a changing and complex world).

These are just some of the implications of research findings on the rurally deprived child. Indeed the findings go on and on; yet in essence they tell us that we need to develop a classroom climate which values each child and implement instructional practices which assist every child in becoming a better human being.